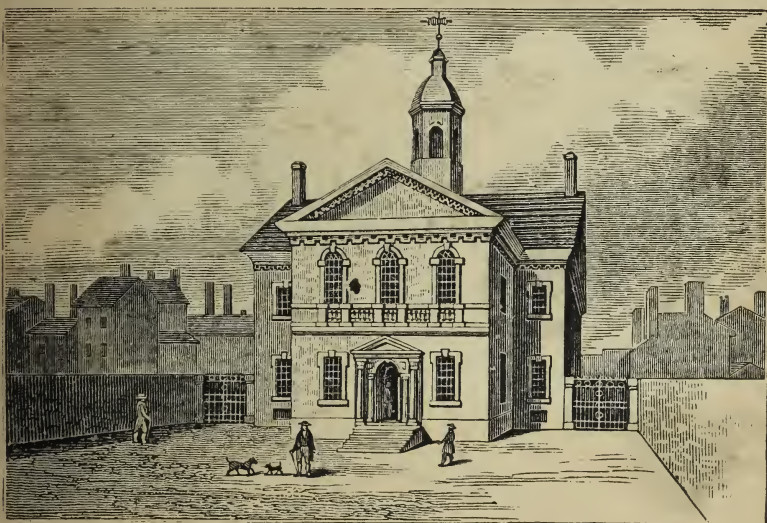


# CARPENTERS' HALL:

THE MEETING PLACE OF THE  
FIRST CONTINENTAL CONGRESS.

FULL SKETCH OF ITS HISTORY FROM 1724;  
WITH VIEWS AND SKETCHES OF  
CARPENTERS' HALL, CLARKE'S HALL, BENEZET'S  
HOUSE, AND CHESTNUT STREET BRIDGE,  
DUCHÉ'S HOUSE, &c., &c.



PREPARED  
For the Soldiers and Sailors Home Fair.  
By CASPER SOUDER, Jr.

*Philadelphia:*  
King & Baird, Printers, No. 607 Sansom street.  
1865.

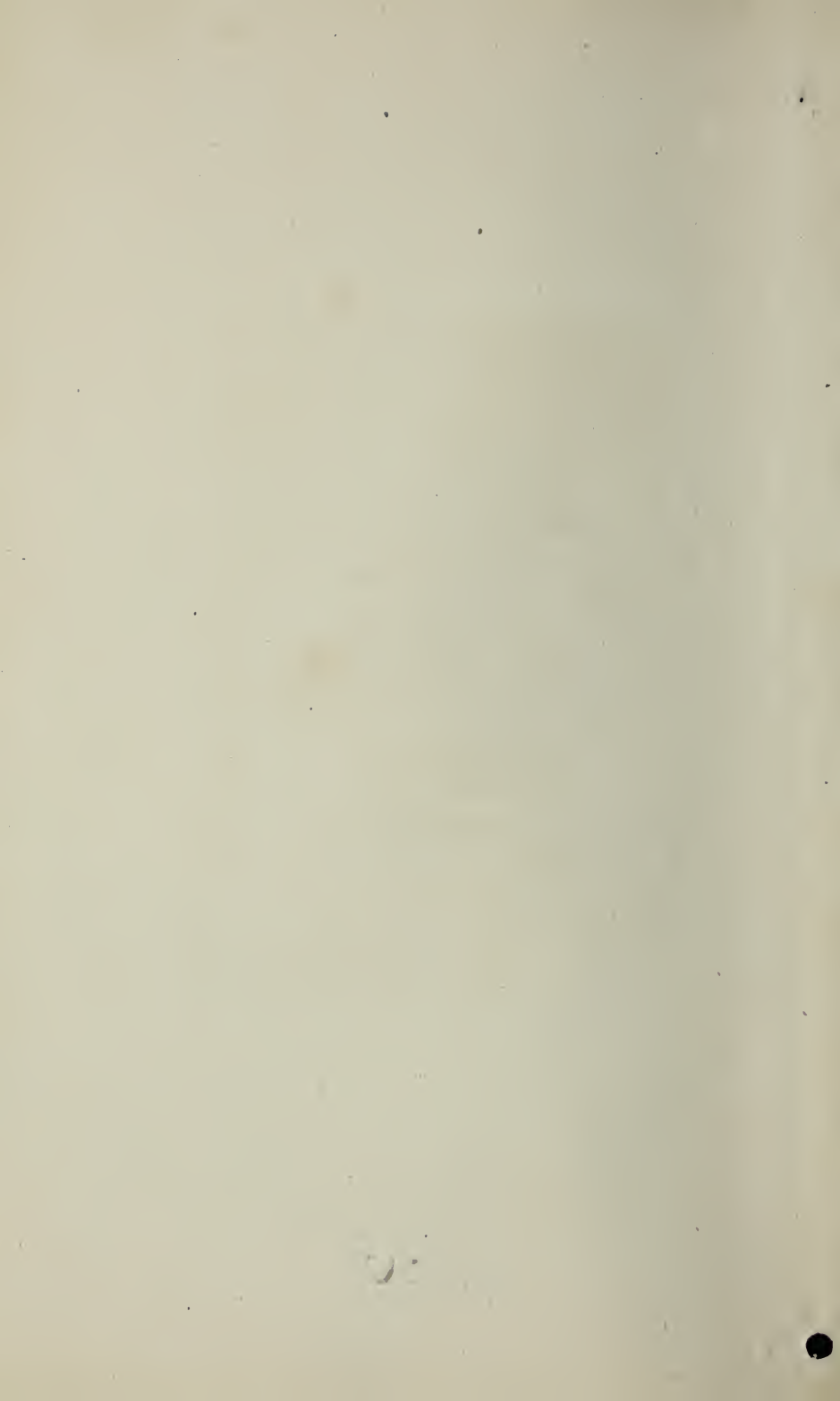
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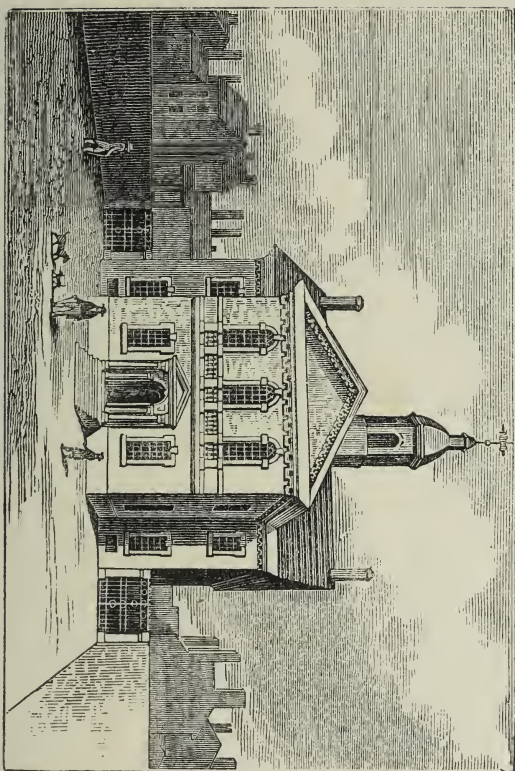
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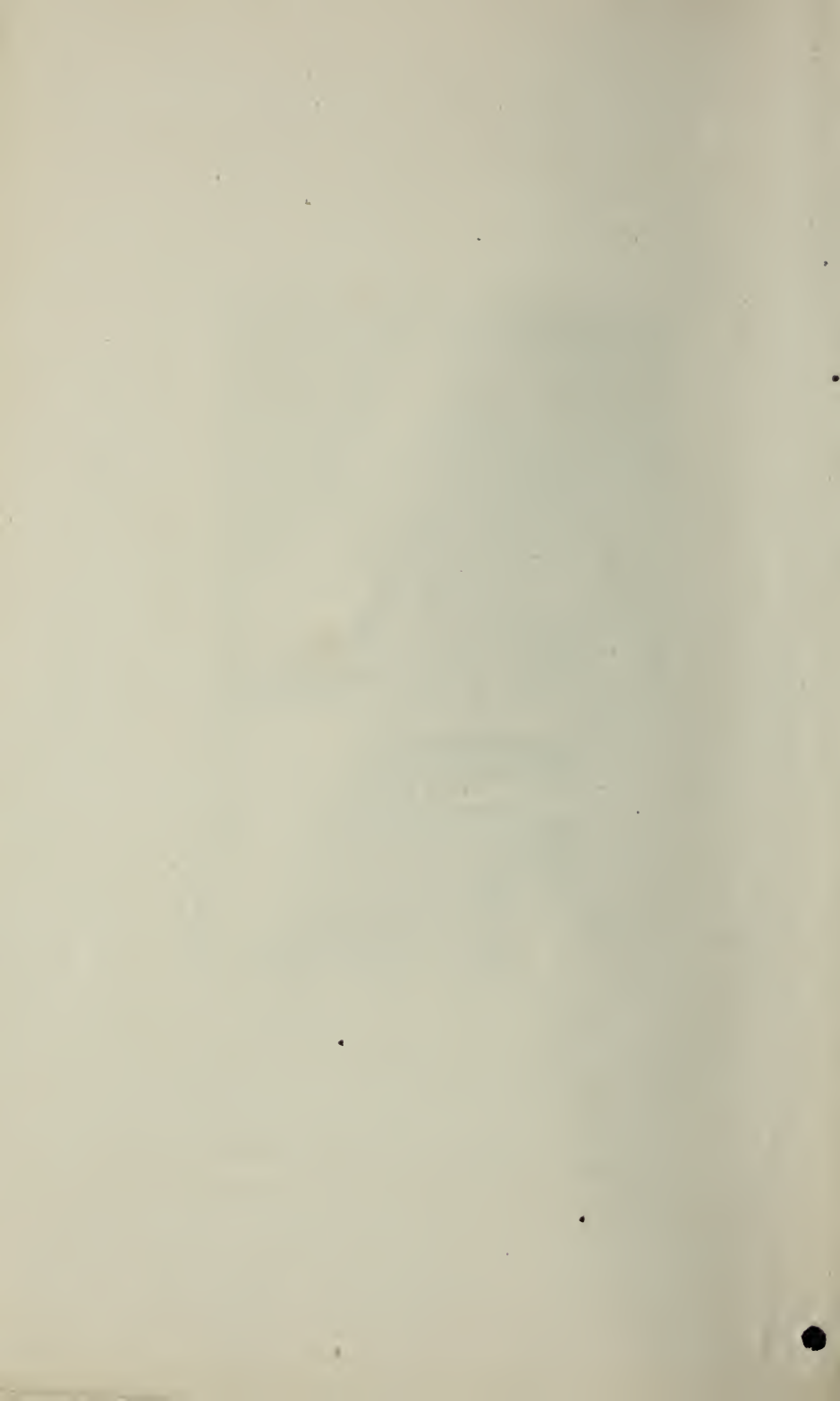
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Carpenters' Hall and Place of First Congress.



## CARPENTERS' HALL.

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THE pedestrian who forms a part of the busy throng that pours daily along the south side of Chestnut street, will notice, about midway between Third and Fourth streets, a handsome iron gateway, tastefully bronzed. This gate bears at its summit the following inscription :

CARPENTERS' HALL,

1724.

The gate, although a formidable-looking barrier, is not kept fastened, the object of its erection being the exclusion of persons who have made the passage-way it protects a common nuisance of late years. This gate, and the passage it adorns and protects, leads to Carpenters' Hall, a cherished relic of Revolutionary times, which stands about one hundred and fifty feet back from the line of Chestnut street.

We have read of ancient places in London—Inns-of-Court—which were located when land was plentiful in and



about the monster metropolis—in places far aloof from the built-up portions of the city. These Inns-of Court are surrounded by walls, and the modern visitor to them turns aside from the crowded street, and in a moment finds himself in a quiet space, where grass is growing, and where sober masses of masonry, centuries old, doze as though there was no such thing as progress in the world, and the original Templars had only retired in-doors, at their ancient quarters, to take an afternoon nap. We often think of these quiet old places, in the midst of noise and bustle, as we leave the human and vehicular torrent which pours along Chestnut street, and walk up the passage which we have already described as leading to Carpenters' Hall. The ancient Hall, with the exception of some recent additions and improvements, stands just as it did in the days of the Revolution; and with its drowsy old semi-circular windows, its ancient "blue header" bricks, which chequer its front, and its adjacent grass-plot, it is as quiet a retreat as though it stood miles from the town, instead of within less than two hundred feet from the core and centre of the "maddening crowd's ignoble strife."

Carpenters' Hall is a well-kept and handsome specimen of the architecture of the eighteenth century. The principal windows are semi-circular at the top, and they, as well as the rather imposing doorway in front, are ornamented with imitation sand-stone dressings. The bricks are alternately the ordinary red affairs and "blue headers," giving the front that peculiar chequer-board appearance common to the structures erected in the city prior to the commencement of the present century. The edifice, which is just fifty feet



square, is surmounted with a neat cupola and vane; and the structure as it stands, is, as we have already said, a very excellent specimen of Philadelphia architecture in the eighteenth century.

## THE CARPENTERS' COMPANY.

In the year 1724 a company was formed of the master carpenters of Philadelphia. The objects of the association were, first, to regulate the prices of carpenter work; and second, to relieve the wants of the families of deceased or sick members. In 1763 the company, which had assumed much of the character of the ancient Guilds of London, concluded that they should have a hall of their own, in which to hold their meetings and transact their business. Accordingly, five worthy members of the craft, named Joseph Fox, John Thornhill, John Goodwin, Benjamin Loxley, and Gunning Bedford, were appointed a committee to select a lot upon which to build a hall for the use of the company. It was five years before choice of a lot was made; and in February of 1768, George Emlen and wife conveyed to the representatives of the Carpenters' Company a lot on Chestnut street below Fourth, sixty-six feet wide and two hundred and fifty-five feet deep, for the consideration of the annual ground rent of "one hundred and seventy-six Spanish milled pieces of eight, of fine silver, each weighing seventeen penny-weights and six grains"—just one hundred and seventy-six Spanish dollars.

In the year 1775 the Carpenters' Company sold to Joseph Pemberton a lot twenty-six feet wide by one hundred and

forty feet deep, from the eastern portion of their lot, leaving themselves a passage-way fourteen feet wide to the rear end of the lot, and sufficient space for a building upon the Chestnut street front, on the western side of the passage. Mr. Pemberton paid about as much for this lot as the entire plot had originally cost the worshipful company of master carpenters; and the house afterwards occupied by Mr. Edward Tilghman, and by the Post Office, and by several publicans, was built.

The Carpenters' Company procured their own portion of the lot gratuitously, through their deft management; but before this transfer was made, they had put up their Hall, which still stands. The building was commenced February 5th, 1770. It was to be a joint stock affair, and the subscribers to the fund were to have an interest in it proportioned to the amount of their subscriptions. The original articles of agreement, and the list of subscribers, now occupy a glazed and gilt frame, and hang in an honorable position in the Hall. The funds were not contributed as rapidly as the building progressed, and the enterprise lagged for a time; but the master carpenters were prudent men, and rather than involve themselves, they met in their Hall while it was still unfinished.

## THE HALL FIRST OCCUPIED.

On the 21st of January, 1771, the Company first occupied their Hall. In 1773 they were in so tight a financial vice, that they were constrained to borrow £300 for the purpose of paying off arrearages and completing the Hall. It was not until 1792 that the final finishing touches were put

upon the structure. The building was hired for various uses during the earlier portion of its career, much the same as public halls are rented at the present day, the Carpenters' Society only occupying a small portion of the building for their own purposes. In 1773 an arrangement was made with the Carpenters' Company, by the Philadelphia Library Company, and for a period of seventeen years the library was located at Carpenters' Hall. The collection of books was, of course, very small in contrast with the stores of literary wealth now ranged upon the shelves of the Library building, at the corner of Fifth and Library streets.

## CONGRESS MEETS IN CARPENTERS' HALL.

When the Revolution commenced, the central location of Carpenters' Hall rendered it a favorite meeting place for the patriotic committees, etc., called into existence by the emergency. On the 5th of September, 1774, the first Continental Congress that had been called to deliberate upon the troubles which were becoming more and more serious between the colonies and the parent country, met at Carpenters' Hall. Washington, Adams, Henry, Randolph, Jay, Rutledge, Lee, and the host of patriots who gave lustre to the first American Congress, walked along the narrow passage-way now called Carpenters' Court, and gathered within the walls of the old Hall.

## THE FIRST PRAYER IN CONGRESS.

The famous "first prayer" in Congress, so often referred to, and made the subject of a very good historical picture

was offered in Carpenters' Hall. The officiating clergyman was the Rev. Jacob Duché, then pastor of Christ Church, who attended in his clerical robes; and after reading the established prayers of the Episcopal Church, he poured forth an eloquent and fervent extempore appeal "for America, for the Congress, for the province of Massachusetts Bay, and especially for the town of Boston." Mr. John Adams, who afterwards described the scene, says that it was the morning after the reception of the news of the cannonading of Boston by the British, and that the tears gushed from the eyes of even the staid old Quakers who were present. It is a pity that "Parson Duché," as he was called, should have afterwards turned Tory, and disgraced himself.

## THE PROVINCIAL ASSEMBLY MEET IN THE HALL.

The first Congress dissolved on the 26th of October, 1774, and when it again met in May, 1775, it was at the State House. During the early part of the Revolutionary struggle the Provincial Assembly met at Carpenters' Hall. On the 24th of October, 1775, the funeral of Peyton Randolph, the first President of the first Continental Congress, took place from Carpenters' Hall and proceeded to Christ Church burial-ground. In 1777, the British, who had taken possession of the city, quartered a portion of the army in Carpenters' Hall; and at one period the room up stairs, used by the Philadelphia Library, was converted into a hospital for sick soldiers. The soldiers quartered at the Hall made a target of the vane on the cupola, and drilled several holes through it; but, to the honor of the officers, no damage

was done to the library, a cash equivalent being left in pledge for every book borrowed, and the usual hire being paid for the use of the volume.

## THE BANK OF THE UNITED STATES IN THE HALL.

In 1791, the first Bank of the United States commenced operations in the old Hall, and it continued there until the completion of its marble building in Third street below Chestnut, now occupied by the Girard Bank and by the City Treasurer and City Controller. In 1798, 1799, and 1800, the Bank of Pennsylvania transacted its business in the Hall.

## THE HALL AND ITS TENANTS.

Below we give a list of the various tenants who have occupied the Hall, and the period of their occupancy:

1773 to 1790. Philadelphia Library Company.

July, 1774. Provincial Committee.

1774. First Continental Congress.

1775. The Provincial Convention.

1776. Provincial Assembly.

During the early part of the Revolution, the cellar and part of the first story were occupied by the United States as a storehouse and office.

September, 1777, to June 1778, the British troops.

1778. United States Barrack Master.



1779 to 1792. General Knox, Commissary General, first floor and cellar.

1791. National Bank.

1794 to 1797. United States Bank.

1797 to 1798. Land Office.

1798 to 1801. Bank of Pennsylvania.

1802 to 1817. Custom House.

1816 to 1821. Second Bank of the United States.

1821 to 1828. Musical Fund Society, first floor.

1821 to 1828. Apprentices' Library, second story.

1821. Society for the Education of Female Children.

1822 to 1832, (with a lapse of two years.) John H. Willets, schoolmaster, second story.

1824 to 1826. Franklin Institute, first floor.

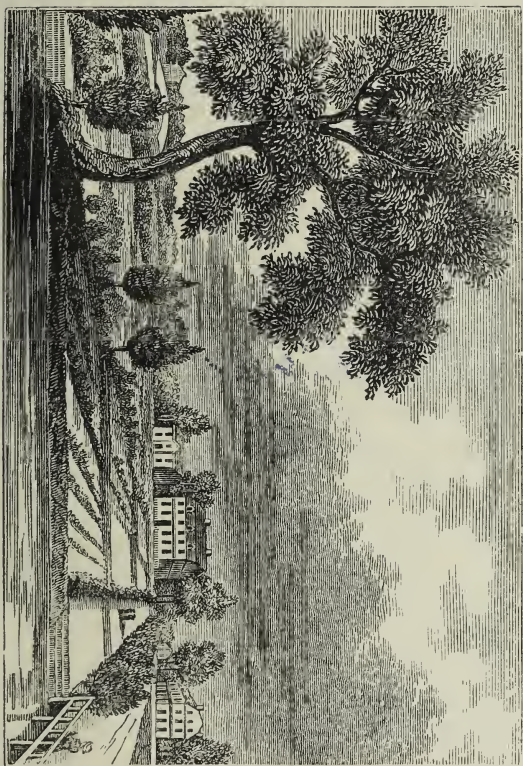
1826 to 1828. Cellar, Gillen & Hill.

1827. Society of Friends, as a meeting house.

1828 to 1857. C. J. Wolbert, auction mart.

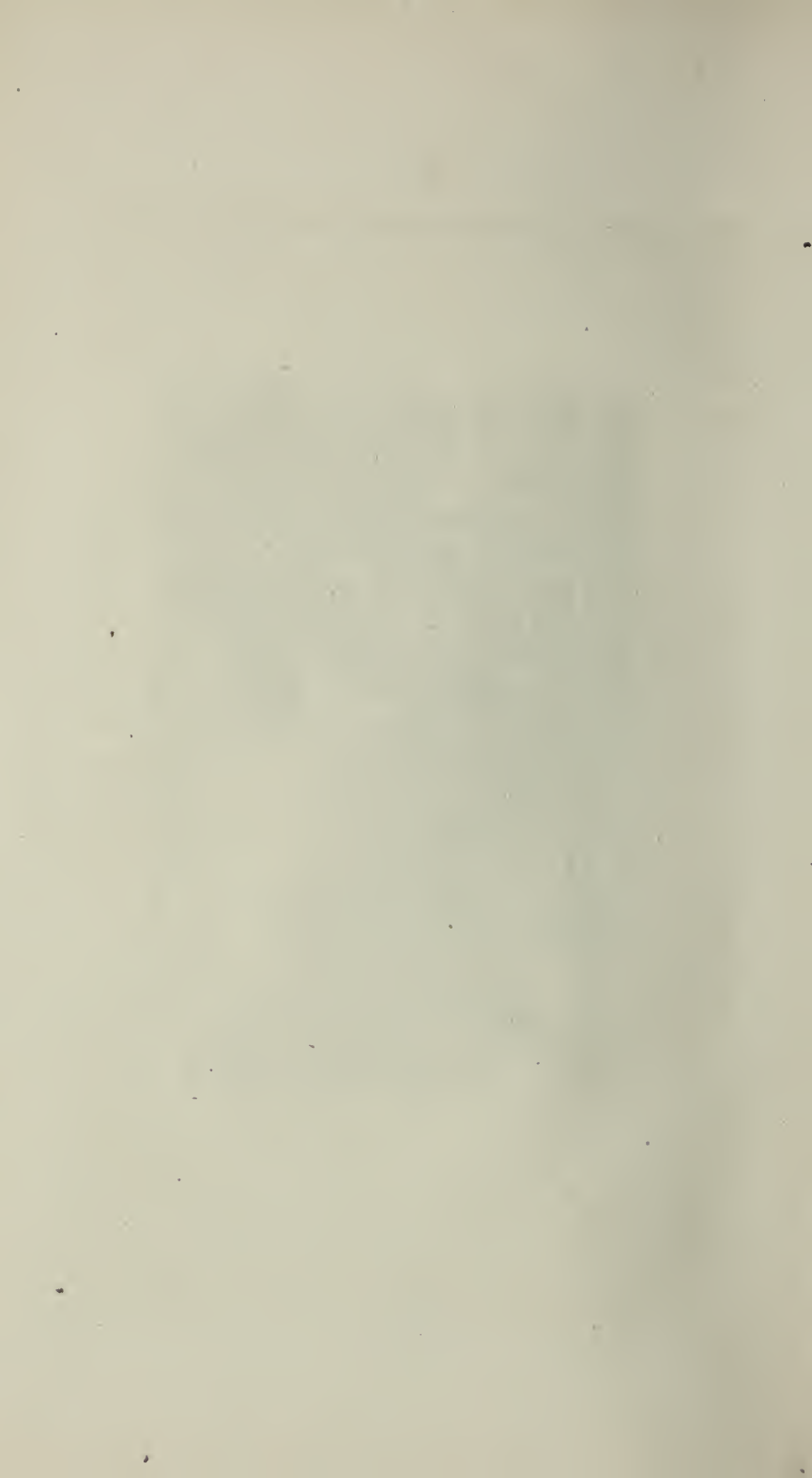
## THE HALL AS IT WAS.

Independence Hall, itself, was for many years a mere lumber room, and within the recollection of many of our readers it was even used for a show room. It is no wonder, then, that Carpenters' Hall, which is private property, should have been suffered, until quite recently, to be devoted to the ordinary purposes of trade, and to be kept in a condition by no means gratifying to those who love to see historical relics cherished and treated with becoming respect. Citizens who were familiar with its history, used occasionally to glance up Carpenters' Court at the quaint, old-fashioned building at the head of it; but unless they



Clarke's Hall, on Chestnut Street.





were in pursuit of bargains at auction they rarely approached nearer to it than Chestnut street. Strangers who were in quest of the objects of historical interest in the city, occasionally searched out the Hall, and more than one hit at the uses to which the building was applied, has found its way into print.

Mr. Lossing, in his *Field Book of the Revolution* (Volume II., page 57,) thus describes a visit which he paid to the ancient structure, November 27, 1848.

"I visited Carpenters' Hall, the building in which the first Continental Congress held its brief session. Having had no intimation concerning its appearance, condition and present use, and informed that it was situated in Carpenters' Court, imagination had invested its exterior with solemn grandeur, and its location a spacious area, where nothing common or unclean was permitted to dwell. How often the hoof of Pegasus touches the leafless tree-tops of sober prose, when his rider supposes him to be at his highest altitude! How often the rainbow of imagination fades, and leaves to the eye nothing but the forbidding aspect of a cloud of plain reality! So at this time. The spacious *Court* was but a short and narrow alley; and the *Hall*, consecrated by the holiest associations which cluster around the birth-time of our Republic, with a small, two-story building of sombre aspect, with a short steeple, and all of a dingy hue. I tried hard to perceive the apparition upon its front to be a classic frieze, with rich historic triglyphs, but it would not do. Vision was too 'lynx-eyed,' and I could make nothing more poetic of it than an array of letters spelling the words:

‘C. J. WOLBERT & CO., Auctioneers,  
For the sale of  
REAL ESTATE AND STOCKS,  
Fancy Goods,  
Horses, Vehicles, and Harness.’

“What a desecration! covering the façade of the very Temple of Freedom with the placards of groveling Mammon. If sensibility is shocked with this outward pollution, it is overwhelmed with indignant shame on entering the hall where that august assemblage of men—the godfathers of our Republic—convened to stand as sponsors at the baptism of infant American Liberty, to find it filled with every species of merchandise; and the walls which once echoed the eloquent words of Henry, Lee, and the Adamses, reverberating with the clatter of the auctioneer’s voice and hammer. Is there not patriotism strong enough and bold enough in Philadelphia to enter the temple, and ‘cast out all them that buy and sell, and overthrow the table of the money-changers?’ ”

## THE OLD HALL RESTORED.

In 1857 the Carpenters’ Company determined to restore their old Hall to its original condition as nearly as possible, and to keep it sacred from trade and traffic.

The first story, in which the first Continental Congress assembled, was grained in imitation of oak; and such articles of new furniture as it was necessary to procure, were made in a style to comport with the ancient relics preserved in the building, and which tradition says were used there by Congress in 1774.

Prominent among these old articles of furniture are two enormously high backed, quaint arm-chairs, which stand upon either side of the rostrum, and which have been inscribed as follows:—"Continental Congress, 1774." Upon the wall, over the desk, is the following inscription in gilt letters:

" Within these Walls  
Henry, Hancock and Adams  
Inspired the  
Delegates of the Colonies  
With Nerve and Sinew for the  
Toils of War,  
Resulting in our National Independence."

On the eastern wall hangs, in a glass case, the satin banner borne by the Carpenters' Company in the Federal Procession, in 1788. It has on it the Carpenters' Arms, and is suitably inscribed. Upon the opposite wall is the banner which was borne by the Society in the grand parade which took place in February, 1832, on the occasion of the centennial anniversary of the birth-day of Washington.

A handsome roll of the members of the Society, in a massive gilt frame, also graces the walls of the room. This roll bears the names of the members of the Society from its foundation, and among them are many who are well known to our citizens.

The upper part of the building has been handsomely fitted up with a library and meeting-room for the members of the Society, and with rooms for the residence of the janitor and his family. In the library are several of the

original leather fire-buckets which belonged to the Hall, before the introduction of hose.

Outside the Hall, in front of the building, a neat grass-plot and flower-beds have been laid out, and handsome lamps occupy the side of the main entrance. The inside of the building has also been supplied with appropriate chandeliers, brackets, &c.

On Saturday, September 5th, 1857, at one o'clock, the Carpenters' Society took formal possession of their Hall. The time chosen was the anniversary of the meeting there of the first Continental Congress, in 1774. The members of the Society, only, were present during the ceremonies of taking possession. A handsome entertainment was provided for the occasion, and an address was delivered by Mr. James Hutchinson. Mr. H. gave a sketch of the history of the Society and its hall.

The Carpenters' Company are entitled to much honor for the liberal manner in which they have sacrificed all the advantages resulting from the use of their Hall for business purposes, and, after a heavy outlay, putting it in a seemly condition, and setting it apart to be kept sacred for its historical associations. The Company have grown rich by carefully husbanding their means, and the income from their large fund is liberally used for the relief of the sick and distressed who have claims upon their benevolence. In January of each year the annual meeting of the Company is held, and upon that occasion a large table, forming a hollow, oblong circle, is set in the Grand Hall, and the worthy members gather around it for a feast. These festivals are confined strictly to the members of the Guild; but

next day the friends of the Company are invited to a second edition of the annual jubilee, and good cheer is dispensed most hospitably. The author has had the pleasure of being a guest at several of these re-unions.

## THE STORY OF "PAT" LYON.

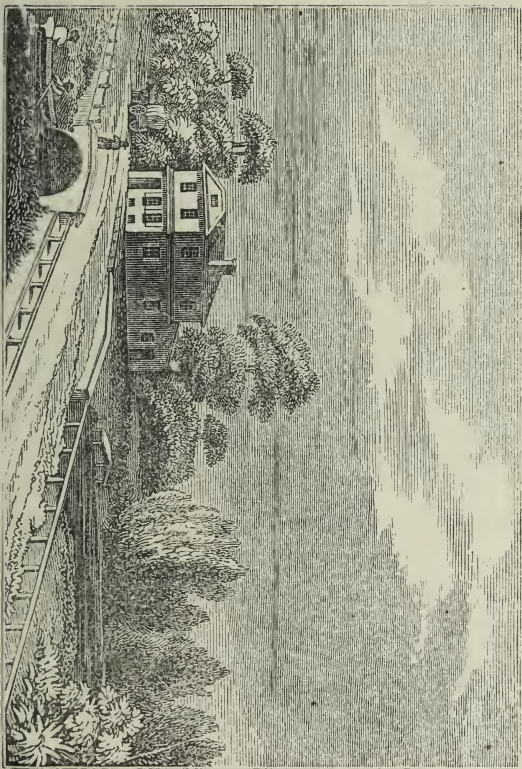
On the evening of the 1st of September, 1798, the Bank of Pennsylvania, at that time in the Carpenters' Hall, was robbed of \$164,000. Suspicion fell upon Patrick Lyon, from the fact that in May, 1797,—sixteen months before the robbery,—he had been employed by the bank to make two doors for the book vault. One Robinson, a carpenter for the bank, directed the work, and Lyon at the time warned them against the locks, which he said were not sufficient for the intended purpose. In August, 1798, the yellow fever becoming extremely malignant, Lyon was employed to do other work about the bank, which was then removed from the Freemasons' lodge room, in Lodge alley, above Second street, to the Carpenters' Hall. A day or two before that an attempt had been made to force open the cash vault of the bank, but nothing was said to Lyon upon the subject. The two inner doors, the locks upon which he had before pronounced inferior, were brought to him by Samuel Robinson to be mended, and Lyon again spoke of their insufficiency. Whilst they were at his shop, one Isaac Davis came with Robinson to look at them. No particular attention was paid to them at the time. The doors were hung on the 14th of August, and the yellow fever becoming worse, Lyon left the city on the 22d, with an



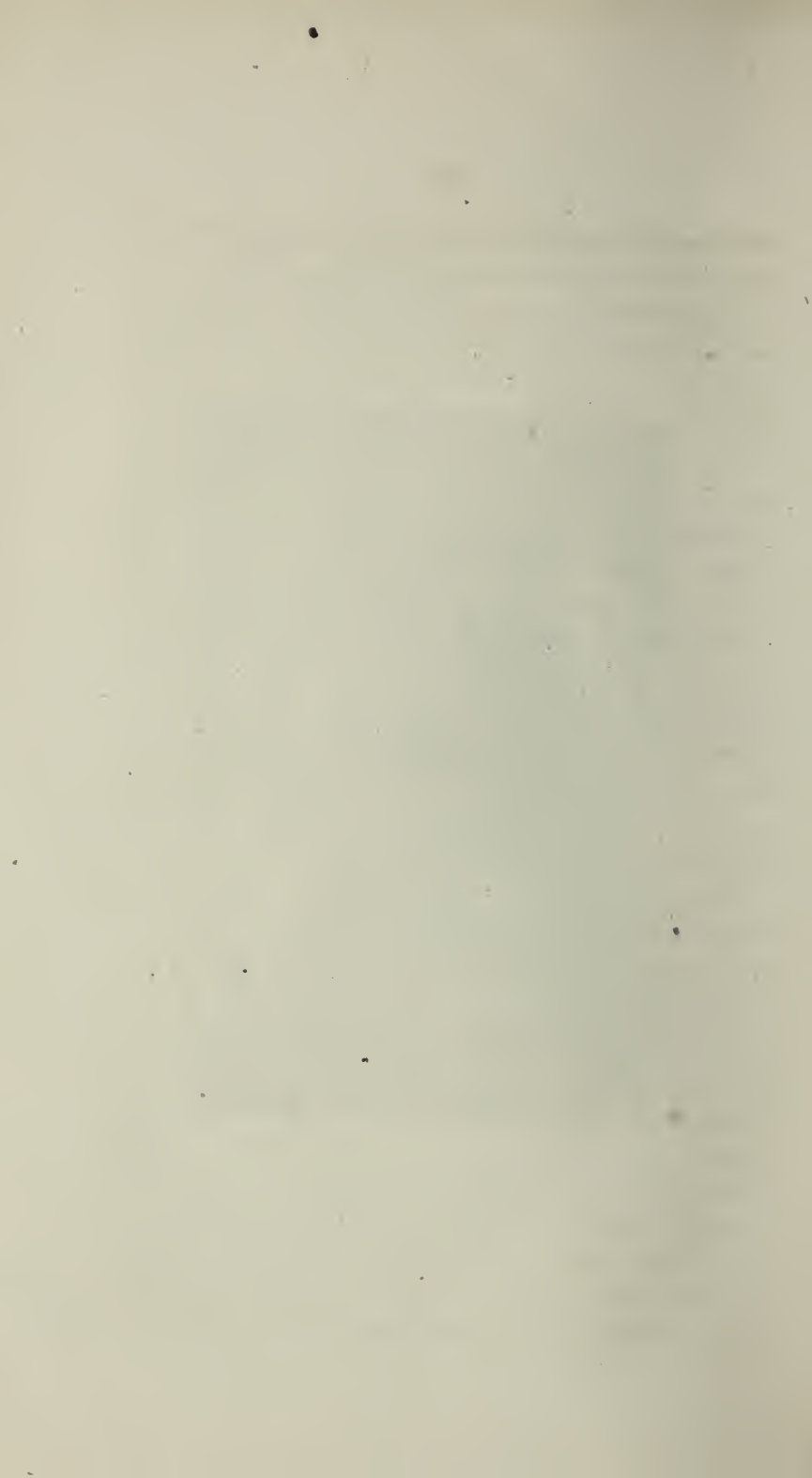
apprentice, and sailed for Lewes, Delaware. Whilst there the apprentice sickened with the yellow fever; and on the night the bank was robbed, Lyon was at Lewes nursing the boy. On the 16th of September news arrived at Lewes that the bank had been plundered, and Lyon was informed that he was suspected. Struck with surprise, he determined to return and meet his accusers, and went to Wilmington on his way homeward. There he could get no conveyance, and therefore determined to walk to Philadelphia. On the 20th he reached the farm of John Clement Stocker, in the Neck. The latter was a director of the bank, and an alderman of the city. Lyon went before him voluntarily on the 21st, and there found Samuel M. Fox, the president of the bank. The only circumstance alleged against him was that he had the doors of the vault in his possession before the robbery, and on that alone he was committed in default of \$150,000 bail.

There were twenty or thirty cases of yellow fever in the jail at the time, and Lyon was exposed to the risks of contagion and death. He was kept there thirteen weeks, without a bed to lie upon, during which time he lost all the hair which was upon his head. Whilst he was in prison, on the 20th of November, nearly the whole of the money was found upon Isaac Davis, who confessed that one Cunningham, a porter of the bank, who died afterwards, and himself, committed the robbery. This ought to have procured Lyon's immediate discharge, but instead of doing that they proceeded against him as an accomplice. He was not released until December 12th, when, on the entry of \$2,000 bail, he was discharged. The indictment was presented to the grand jury in January, 1799—Samuel Fox,





Benezet's House and Chestnut Street Bridge.



Jonathan Smith and John Haines, the high-constable, being witnesses—but the jury *ignoramus* it.

Cunningham, the porter, was shown to have been entrusted with the keys of the bank the night before the robbery; yet, strange to say, no suspicion fell upon him. His accomplice, Davis—the man who had been with Robinson to Lyon's shop, to look at the doors—was a carpenter, and attention was first directed to him by his making a deposit of \$1,600 in the bank after the robbery had taken place. He had been before without means, and the circumstance excited suspicion. Shortly afterwards he deposited \$3,910 more, and it was found he had made deposits in other banks. Davis was then taxed with the robbery, confessed the circumstances, gave up all the money but a few hundred dollars which he had spent, and was then allowed to escape by the bank officers. Notwithstanding these notorious facts, they still endeavored to persecute Lyon, and presented the bill against him as an accomplice.

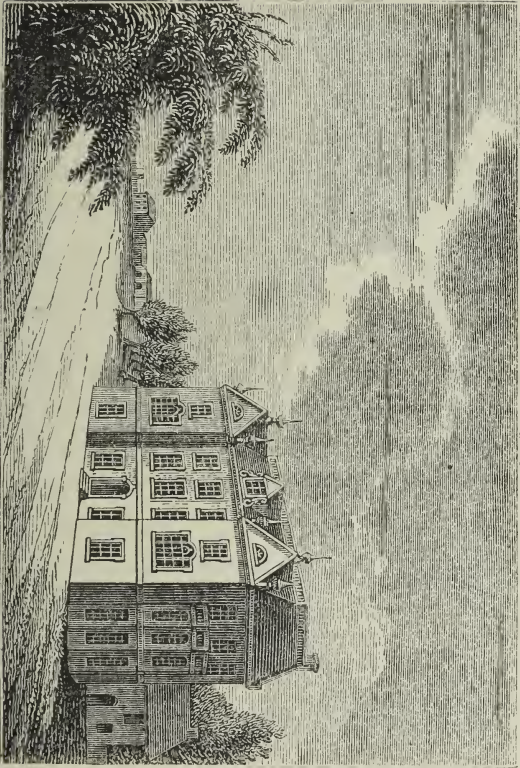
The circumstances of the case were so outrageous, and the conduct of the bank officers so unjustifiable, that Lyon brought a suit against Fox, Smith, Stocker and Haines, in the Supreme Court. The trial took place in December, 1805, and the jury returned a verdict for plaintiff of \$12,000 damages. Subsequently a new trial was granted, but the matter was compromised by the payment of \$9,000 to Lyon.

Thus ended one of the strangest occurrences in Philadelphia history—a matter which created the greatest excitement at the time, and is yet a subject of tradition among our older citizens. At that time Lyon was principally known as a locksmith and blacksmith. Birch's picture of the Philadelphia Library building, taken in 1800, contains

a view of Lyon's blacksmith shop, which stood on the southeast corner of Fifth and Library streets. "Pat" and his journeymen and his apprentices got up real anvil choruses there in a one-storied tumble-down frame shanty, which was in very decided contrast with the fine building of the Mercantile Library, which now occupies the site. Between the skill of Lyon as a locksmith, an iron chest maker, and an engine builder, his reputation as a rough, practical joker and his famous affair with the Bank of Pennsylvania, he was rendered one of the notable men of his time.

## THE CHANGES AROUND THE HALL.

While Carpenters' Hall presents much the same appearance now as it did eighty years ago, the ground west of it, upon Chestnut street, has undergone a thorough revolution within that period, and no trace of its original condition is now visible from the street.



Duché's House.





## THE SOLDIERS' AND SAILORS' HOME FAIR AND THE HALL.

Among the most benevolent and patriotic enterprises that have grown out of the War for that Union, the corner-stone of which was shaped, if not laid, at CARPENTERS' HALL in 1774, is the SOLDIERS' AND SAILORS' HOME. A great Fair in aid of this enterprise was held in the Fall of 1865, at the Academy of Music: and in December of the same year, the good work, commenced at the more pretentious building on Broad street, was continued in the ancient historical structure which forms the subject of our sketch. It was eminently proper that the spot so intimately connected with the creation of our beloved Republic, should perform so honorable a part in making provision for the gallant men who were maimed or disabled in the late great struggle for the preservation of the nation. The Carpenters' Company evinced their accustomed patriotism, by tendering the use of their Hall to the promotion of the objects of the benevolent and patriotic enterprise.

### OUR ILLUSTRATIONS.

In addition to a view of the Hall itself, as it stood at a period somewhat remote, we have added to our little work views of ancient places in the immediate vicinity of the old Hall, or such as may be referred to in the text. These pictures represent Benezet's house, with the Chestnut Street Bridge hard by, Parson Duché's house, and Clarke's Hall. We append some account of each.



## CLARKE'S HALL.

Clarke's Hall was the nearest neighbor of Carpenters' Hall on the east, at the time the latter was erected. In the early days of the city it was built for William Clarke, Esq., a lawyer of the infant town. It was occupied, in 1704, by James Logan, who entertained William Penn, Jr., there. The earlier Governors of the State resided there successively, and Andrew Hamilton, the Attorney-General, lived there for a considerable time. But it is best known among local antiquarians as "Pemberton's Garden." The view we give of it is taken from the south, and the little bridge shewn in the foreground spanned Dock creek at where Third and Dock streets now form a junction. Clarke's Hall is on the left, where the Ledger office now stands. The building upon the right is the ancient dwelling of Mayor William Hudson. The neighborhood has changed somewhat since this view was taken.

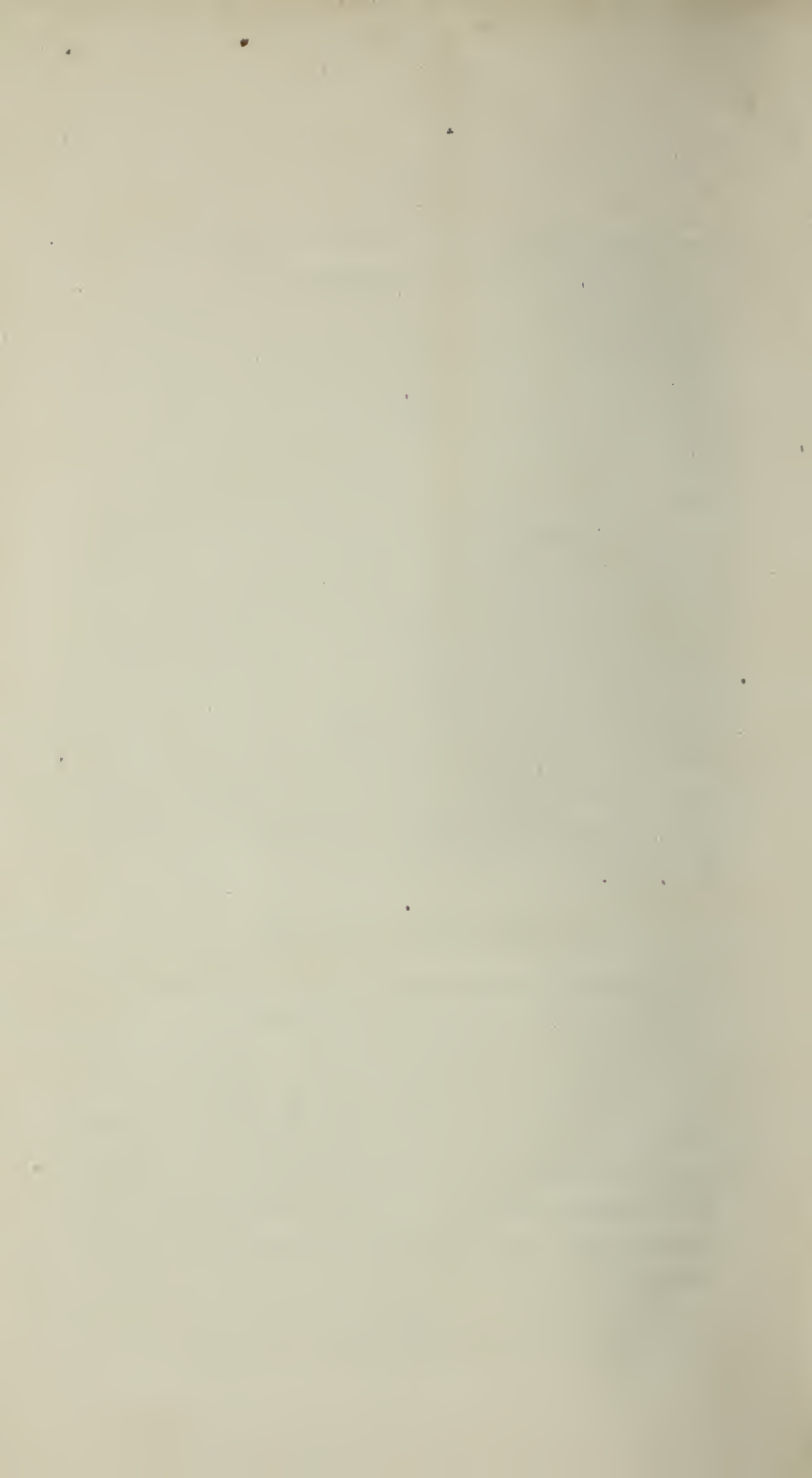
## BENEZET'S HOUSE AND CHESTNUT STREET BRIDGE.

On the north side of Chestnut street, and on the spot where the building No. 323 now stands, and nearly opposite Carpenters' Hall, there stood, until forty-five or fifty years ago, a quaint old structure that was known as "Benezet's House." The bridge seen in the picture spanned Dock creek at the point where that stream emerged from the line of what is now Hudson's alley, to continue its wandering course up through Franklin place,

after crossing Chestnut street, and then to lose itself among the woods about Fourth and Market streets. The house seen in the engraving was built by David Breintnal, a wealthy Friend, who, deeming it too fine for his sober "cloth," rented it to a Governor of one of the West India islands, who visited Philadelphia for the benefit of his health, and who found it very convenient to simply step across the green lawn to the east side of his mansion, when he had a mind to go boating upon the creek, which ran along at the foot of the hill. The spot gains its principal historical interest from the fact of its having long been the residence of Anthony Benezet, an eccentric Frenchman, who taught school there, and who was always active in works of benevolence and charity. Through his earnest endeavors in that direction, he is believed to have been the first to arouse an active and effective anti-slavery sentiment in Great Britain and the United States. Mr. Benezet died in 1784.

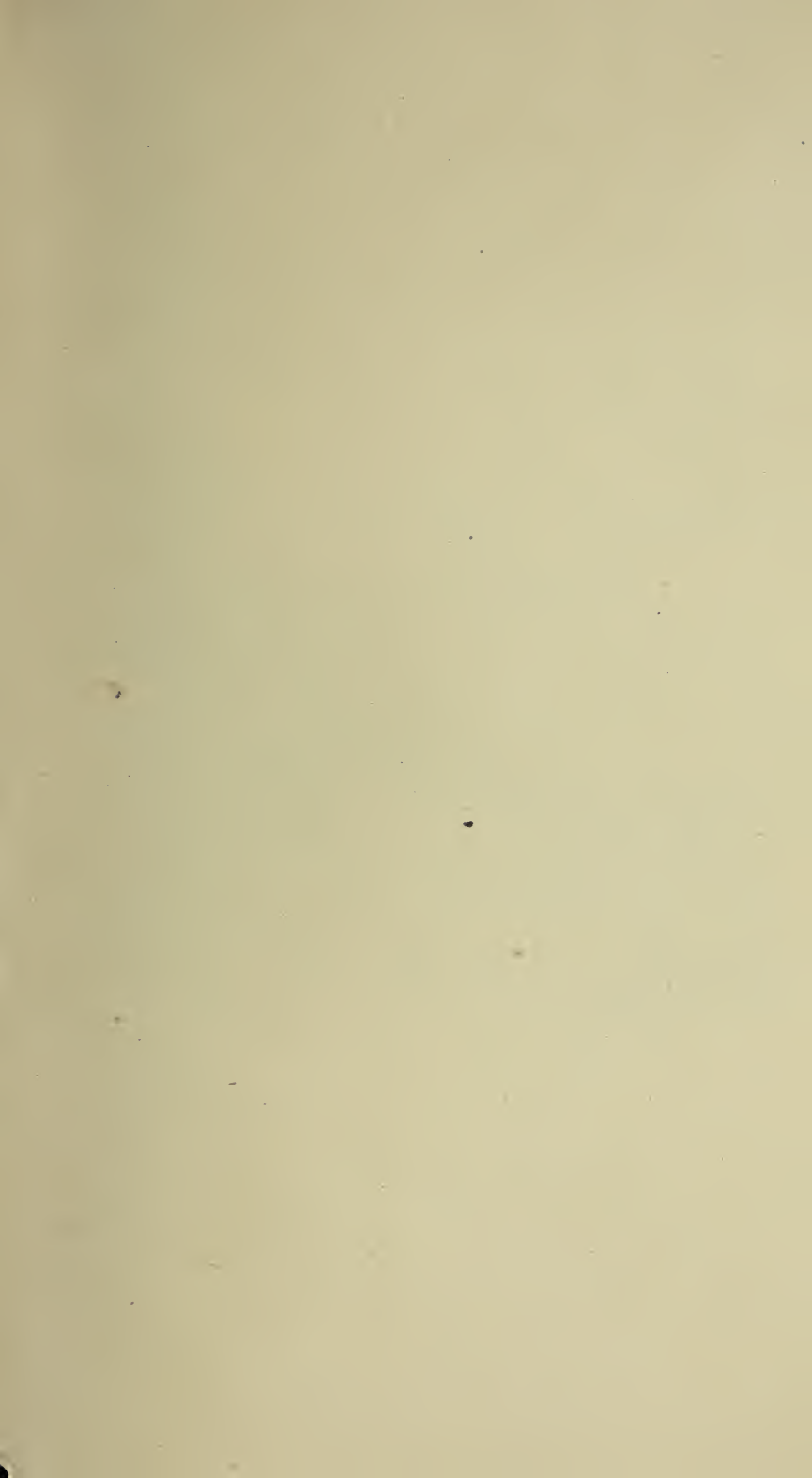
## DUCHÉ'S HOUSE.

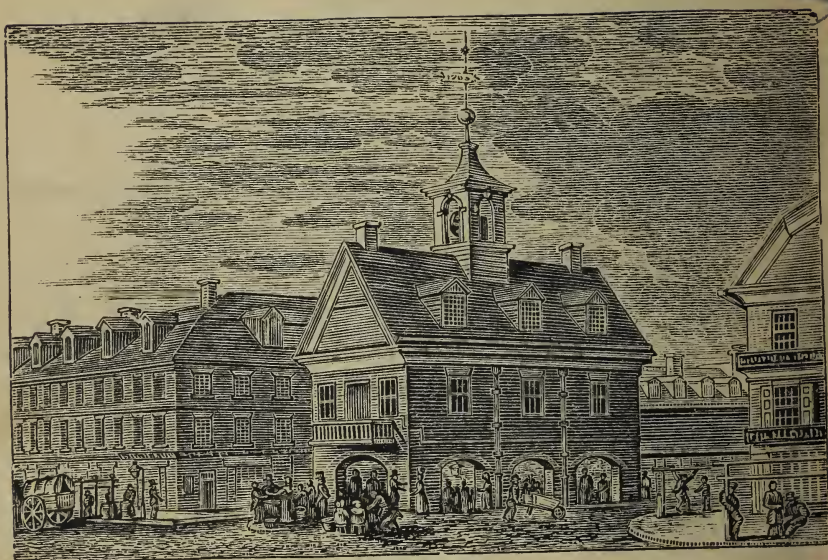
This fine old mansion stood on the east side of Third street, above Pine. It was built in 1758, for the Rector of St. Peter's Church, which still stands at the corner diagonally opposite. It was the residence of the Rev. Mr. Duché, better known as "Parson Duché," at the time that gentleman delivered the famous first prayer in Congress, when that august body met in CARPENTER'S HALL, in 1774. Duché's house was afterwards occupied by Governor McKean.











Court House, Market and Second Streets, Philadelphia.